

Fall Color Report – October 29, 2021



Northern Illinois

While it was a mainly gloomy week in much of the state, the scattered frost in parts of northern Illinois resulted in a pop to some fall colors in the region.

In northeastern Illinois, hickories are turning bright yellow and brown. Maples are turning a range from yellow to purple. Red oaks are slowly turning red and white oaks are slowly turning brown. Sumacs are deep red this week. It should be a good weekend to enjoy a nature hike at Illinois Beach State Park.



In south suburban areas, primarily in low areas where cool air settles at night, red oaks, white oaks, and hickories have rolled into the beginnings of autumn glory. Oaks have been rolling into their various shades with splashes of brown, gold, red and orange. Hickories are turning a clear golden color, illuminating the canopy with pockets of beauty. Sugar maples and black maples are coloring nicely, with shades of red, orange and gold having been seen, even on cloudy days. The few red mulberries not defoliated in areas protected from winds are brightening up with shades of yellow. Black cherry (if

still in leaf) are blushing a mild red and add to the overall beauty of the forest. Persimmons are turning shades of apricot and yellow.

Central Illinois



Colors were coming on fast in the upper Illinois River valley this week. There is still a lot of green in the oaks, but the maples are getting some great color. Leaf spotters saw some great yellows in hickories, hackberry trees and elms. Lots of roadside red was seen in sumac, poison ivy, Virginia creeper, and dogwoods. With frost in many locations, leaves should change quickly and then drop quickly.

In east central Illinois, the oranges and yellows from the hickories and sugar maples are picking up, with a few black walnuts showing yellow. More rust or burnt orange has been showing from the red oak and black oak trees. Some white oaks are starting to show signs of turning with hints of burgundy or purple.



Color really popped out early this week in areas of west central Illinois, then heavy rains and high winds took down a lot of leaves. White oaks are starting to show some purple; red oaks and black oaks are showing more reds and browns. The understory in the woods is turning shades of gold and brown. Sumac is at or past peak and losing leaves. Maples are starting to show a lot of color, with lots of yellow on maples this year. It is still very green in the woodlands, but leaf watchers are definitely seeing more color than last week.

In western Illinois, pecan and some stubborn oak species remain predominantly green, while the foliage on most other area tree species continues to actively turn. Hickories, walnuts, silver maples, cottonwoods, Osage orange, mulberry, catalpa, hackberries and buckeyes continue to yellow. Sugar maples and ash trees are showing more yellow, red, gold, purple and orange. Sycamores are showing orange and brown in most areas. The next few days will probably see the start of the fall color peak.

Southern Illinois

In upper counties in southern Illinois, some of the sweet gums and sassafras are partly turning yellow and red, while the sumacs are turning bright red. The tulip poplar leaves are showing some yellowing, the cypress trees are starting to show some bronzing, while sycamores and walnuts are showing yellow leaves.

In some locations, there was a pop of fall color this week with sugar maples showing beautiful yellow to deep orange hues. Sassafras are still holding deep reds. Black oaks are just beginning to turn a dull orange. Hickories are striking yellow and brown amongst other foliage. White oaks are not quite changing yet but should be showing deep burgundy colors in the next 7-10 days.



Farther south, leaf watchers report bottomland trees, understory, upland and some overstory trees are turning yellow and orange with a few reds and purples mixed in. They observed yellow colors in elms, pawpaw, maple, sycamore, basswood, hickory, oaks, and tulip poplar trees, as well as red and purple colors in sassafras, black gums, sweetgums, dogwoods, and some oaks.

Cooler weather had sugar maples starting to change to an autumnal mix of yellow and orange. Walnuts and sumac growing next to each other are just about the brightest burgundy and gold you'll see, contrasting nicely with sweet gum in purple.

In the Cache River State Natural Area, the leaves have noticeably changed this week. Many maples have a yellow cast now, but oaks remain green. A bluff line or expanse of trees appears mostly green with little spots of color. The trees which have been changing (sassafras, yellow poplar, sycamore, ash, black gum, persimmon) are losing some leaves.

Peak colors are approaching in southern Illinois, so plan a drive or hike in the weeks ahead.

